

Last week's Debate on Creating a Commission to Shutter Failing Government Programs Offers Insight on Objections Democrats Will Raise to Maintain Wasteful Spending Power

May 25, 2010 | House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA)

"I support efforts to cut wasteful government spending and failing programs, but I'm skeptical that congressional Democrats are ready to work in good faith on a line-item veto or other real efforts to reduce spending. Congressional Democrats just like spending too much to give up real spending powers."

-- Ranking Member Darrell Issa

On May 20, during the Oversight and Government Reform Committee mark-up of H.R. 2142, the Government Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Performance Act, [Congressman Aaron Schock \(R-IL\) offered an amendment](#)

to create a bipartisan Federal Program Sunset Commission to study and shutter Federal programs that even the Administration agrees are failing.

This Commission would review all federal programs based on the performance criteria established in the underlying bill, historical performance data, meetings with Congress, hearings and public input. After the review, the Commission would then abolish all non-performing or duplicative federal programs which are not specifically reauthorized by Congress.

While the amendment might seem like a common sense proposal, the amendment failed to pass the Committee by a vote of 11 to 16, with only two Democrats, Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN) and Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL), voting yes.

As the amendment has a similar goal and method as the Obama line-item veto proposal, the debate on it may yield clues on arguments Democrats will use to oppose the President's proposal.

Some of the arguments Committee Democrats used on May 20 to defend wasteful spending programs and the spending power of Congress:

“This amendment would force agencies to plead for their lives, and I think it would be a distraction, causing them to be distracted from their mission. Instead of defending the public they would be defending themselves against extinction or being restructured into irrelevance.”

“This is a backdoor effort to undermine our laws.”

“The President has already established a commission on deficit reduction that is doing this work but its recommendations must be approved by the Congress and of course I think that’s very important.”

-- Chairman Edolphus Towns

"If you're gonna take away the power that my constituents gave me, I mean one centilla of it, then I wanna be in a position to at least go through it, try to figure out what that's all about."

-- Rep. Elijah Cummings

"I would ask [the author] actually to move even further and to look at our tax code, and to look at the waste that we have in terms of all of the tax expenditures – the tax credits, the exemptions, the deductions, that are granted around here that further exacerbate the debt and the deficit that we now have."

"I'm willing to work with the Member but I can't support his effort here today ..."

-- Rep. Steve Driehaus

Will Democrats who voted against Rep. Schock's efforts to eliminate ineffective and duplicative programs support new authority for the President to eliminate wasteful spending? Those who opposed the Schock amendment may hold the answer.

Members who opposed the Schock amendment:

Rep. Towns

Rep. Cummings

Rep. Kucinich

Rep. Tierney

Rep. Clay

Rep. Watson

Rep. Lynch

Rep. Connolly

Rep. Van Hollen

Rep. Cuellar

Rep. Murphy

Rep. Welch

Rep. Foster

Rep. Speier

Rep. Driehaus

Rep. Chu

Click [here](#) to watch the debate on the Schock amendment (see 26:00 mark).